

Message Text

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SUBJECT: LIBERAL PARTY STRIVES FOR UNITY

REF: ROME 14823

SUMMARY: LIBERAL PARTY NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING JANUARY 30-FEBRUARY 1 RATIFIED UNITARY ACCORD BETWEEN PARTY CENTER AND LEFT FACTIONS. PLI ELDER STATESMAN MALAGODI MOVED UPSTAIRS TO NEWLY CREATED POST OF HONORARY PRESIDENT. FORMER SECRETARY BIGNARDI TOOK OVER MALAGODI'S POSITION AS PLI PRESIDENT, WHILE LEFT OF CENTER "OPPOSITION CARTEL" CANDIDATE, VALERIO ZANONE WAS ELECTED AS PLI SECRETARY. ACCORD MARRED BY AGNRY CHARGES BY SMALL PLI RIGHT WING OF SELLOUT TO LEFT AND BY HIGH PERCENTAGE OF BLANK BALLOTS. NEW PLI MAJORITY ADVOCATES PROGRAM OF SEEKING INCREASED COOPERATION WITH OTHER NON-MARXIST, DEMOCRATIC LAY PARTIES AND PARTICULARLY WITH REPUBLICANS. END SUMMARY.

1. FOLLOWING SEVERAL MONTHS OF INTENSIVE NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN MALAGODI CENTRIST MAJORITY AND "CARTEL" OF DISSIDENT CENTRISTS AND PLI LEFT FACTION SUPPORTERS, ACCORD REACHED FOR UNITARY LEADERSHIP OF PARTY. AGREEMENT LEAVES ONLY SMALL PLI RIGHT-WING FACTION (SOGNO) IN OPPOSITION. PRESSURE FOR ACCORD CAME FROM LIBERALS' INCREASING SENSE OF ISOLATION FOLLOWING NATIONAL SHIFT TO LEFT REGISTERED BY JUNE 15 LOCAL
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ELECTIONS.

2. PLI NATIONAL COUNCIL MET JANUARY 30-FEBRUARY 1 TO RATIFY UNITARY PACT WORKED OUT BY PARTY LEADERS. PARTY PRESIDENT MALAGODI MOVED INTO PLI HALL OF FAME WITH NEWLY CREATED TITLE OF HONORARY PRESIDENT. CENTER FACTION LEADER BIGNARDI YIELDED SECRETARYSHIP TO "CARTEL" CANDIDATE, VALERIO ZANONE, AND TOOK OVER PLI PRESIDENCY. RIGHT-WING FACTION UNDER SOGNO WON ONLY THREE OF 21 ELECTED (PLUS 9 EX-UFFICIO) POSITIONS ON PLI DIRECTORATE, WITH MALAGODI FORCES AND "CARTEL" SPLITTING REST EVENLY.

3. TO BALANCE AWARD TO PARTY LEFT OF SECRETARYSHIP, ACCORD PROVIDED FOR INCREASED POWERS FOR PLI PRESIDENT. PLI DIRECTORATE MEETING IMMEDIATELY AFTER NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING VOTED PROPOSAL (TO BE RATIFIED BY NEXT PLI CONGRESS) TO MODIFY PARTY STATUTES TO MAKE LIBERAL PARTY PRESIDENT "REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PARTY AND ITS UNITY" AND ALLOW HIM TO TAKE PART IN MEETINGS OF THE PLI SECRETARIAT. (NOTE: SECRETARIAT COMPOSED OF SECRETARY PLUS 4 VICE SECRETARIES.) DIRECTORATE PROPOSAL ALSO PROVIDED THAT SECRETARIAT DECISIONS WOULD BE TAKEN IN "COLLEGIAL" FASHION, THUS GIVING NEAR VETO POWER TO TWO VICE SECRETARIES OF MALAGODI FACTION. INCLUDED IN DIRECTORATE PROPOSAL IS ESTABLISHMENT OF NEW POST OF HONORARY PLI PRESIDENT WITH RIGHT OF VOTING PARTICIPATION IN PARTY DIRECTORATE AND NATIONAL COUNCIL AS WELL AS RESPONSIBILITY FOR REPRESENTING PLI IN INTERNATIONAL BODIES. NET RESULT OF ACCORD IS ALMOST EVEN BALANCE BETWEEN CENTER AND LEFT PLI GROUPINGS IN THE PARTY SECRETARIAT AND DIRECTORATE. IN LATTER BODY, HONORARY PRESIDENT HOLDS WING VOTE BETWEEN THE TWO, ALTHOUGH THREE-MAN SOGNO (RIGHTIST) FACTION DELEGATION COULD TIP SCALES EITHER WAY ON ANY GIVEN ISSUE WHERE CENTER AND LEFT DISAGREED.

4. JOINT POLICY DOCUMENT VOTED BY CENTER AND LEFT PLI GROUPS REPRESENTS VERY MODEST LEFTWARDS SHIFT IN PLI ORIENTATION. SHIFT, HEATEDLY CRITICIZED BY PLI RIGHT AND BY SOME CENTRISTS INCLUDING BROSIO, INVOLVES SOMEWHAT LESS CRITICAL POSITION TOWARD THE PSI AND EMPHASIS ON NEED TO WORK FOR "A GRADUAL ACCORD" WITH THE NON-MARXIST, LAY PARTIES (I.E., REPUBLICANS AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATS). MANY IN MALAGODI WING JUDGE CHANGES OF OPERATIVE ACCORD WITH OTHER LAY PARTIES TO BE MORE OF A "PIOUS CONFIDENTIAL

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HOPE" (IN WORDS OF ONE MALAGODI LIEUTENANT) THAN NEAR TERM POSSIBILITY. PLI LEFT FACTION SOURCES ARE SOMEWHAT MORE OPTIMISTIC, BUT DO NOT SEE SUCH AN ACCORD AS AROUND CORNER.

5. DISSENT WITHIN BOTH CENTER AND LEFT WINGS OF PARTY REGARDING TERMS OF ACCORD PRODUCED HIGH NUMBER OF PROTEST ABSTENTIONS AND WALKOUTS. MALAGODI HIMSELF RECEIVED ONLY 82 OUT OF 141 NATIONAL COUNCIL VOTES CAST, ALTHOUGH CENTER AND

LEFT FACTIONS TOGETHER THEORETICALLY CONTROL 4/5 OF PARTY. PARTY RIGHT WING WAS SO INFURIATED BY ACCORD AND MALAGODI'S LEADING ROLE IN ACHIEVING IT THAT THEY PROPOSED PLI HEAD USHER FOR HONORARY PRESIDENT AND GAVE HIM 13 VOTES. ZANONE DID SOMEWHAT BETTER THAN MALAGODI, RECEIVING 98 VOTES. HOWEVER, CRITICS OF ACCORD WERE QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT ZANONE WAS SUPPORTED BY ONLY 65 PERCENT OF COUNCILORS PRESENT AT THE MEETING. BIGNARDI RECEIVED 110 VOTES, A RELATIVELY STRONG EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT WHICH ONE PLI SOURCE THOUGHT STEMMED FROM FACT THAT BIGNARDI HAD JUST RETURNED TO PARTY WORK AFTER RECOVERY FROM A HEART ATTACK.

6. ACCORD WITHIN PLI IS DESIGNED TO LAST UNTIL NEXT PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. IF IT HOLDS UP, ULTIMATE HOPE IS FOR FORMAL MERGER OF CENTER AND LEFT PLI FACTIONS. FIRST BIG TEST FOR ACCORD WILL BE PLI CONGRESS, NOW EXPECTED TO BE HELD IN MARCH OR EARLY APRIL. BICKERING AT RECENT NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING SUGGESTS THAT UNITARY AGREEMENT MAY FACE ROUGH GOING AT CONGRESS.

7. COMMENT: ACCORD, IF IT HOLDS, SHOULD BE GOOD FOR AILING PLI. ZANONE, A 40-YEAR OLD PIEDMONT REGIONAL COUNCILOR FROM TURING, REPRESENTS VIGOROUS, YOUNGER ELEMENTS IN PLI WHO HAVE FELT SUFFOCATED BY ABLE BUT AUTOCRATIC MALAGODI LEADERSHIP. COOPERATION WITH DEMOCRATIC LAY PARTIES LIKE THE REPUBLICANS MAY BE PLI'S ONLY HOPE OF BREAKING OUT OF ISOLATION INTO POLITICAL RELEVANCE. UNFORTUNATELY, CHANCES THAT PRI AND PSDI WILL SOON ACCEPT ANY SUBSTANTIAL TIE WITH LIBERALS IS REMOTE. VOLPE

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